

Philo, C. (2017) Squeezing, bleaching, and the victims' fate: wounds, geography, poetry, micrology. *GeoHumanities*, 3(1), pp. 20-40.
(doi:[10.1080/2373566X.2017.1291311](https://doi.org/10.1080/2373566X.2017.1291311))

This is the author's final accepted version.

There may be differences between this version and the published version.
You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/137682/>

Deposited on: 02 March 2017

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

'Squeezing, ... 'bleaching' and 'the victims' fate': wounds, geography, poetry, micrology

Chris Philo
University of Glasgow

This paper opens a dialogue between geohumanities and poetry – or, more broadly, creative writing – around the subject-matters of violence and wounding. It considers what kinds of 'poetry' might be usefully enrolled by the geoliterary critic, or even authored by the geographer-poet, in response to such subject-matters. Difficult questions abound about what it means to author, hear and read poetry that is engaged and enraged by instances of violence, trauma and victimhood. One horizon for these questions is Adorno's claim that 'there can be no more poetry after Auschwitz', and more particularly his elaboration and partial retreat from this claim in *Negative Dialectics* (1973). Here, wary of attempts 'at squeezing any kind of sense, however bleached, out of the victims' fate' (Adorno 1973, 361), he nonetheless concludes that 'perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man to scream; hence it may be wrong to say that after Auschwitz you can no longer write poems' (363). This paper explores Adorno's position, chiefly pursuing his arguments about the need for poetry – and indeed philosophy – that strives not for 'purity' but precisely to be 'soiled' and 'spoiled', never comforting, always disconcerting, never idealistically 'transcendent', always materialistically 'micrological'. Including reference to a short story by Borges and critique of poetry by the geographer Wreford Watson, the argument is further advanced by attending to Adorno's claims about another poet, Heine, sometimes regarded as a particularly 'geographical' poet. The paper concludes with final notes on possible implications for recasting work on wounded geographies as a species of 'applied micrology'. **Key words: poetry; micrology; Adorno; Holocaust; Borges; Heine**

EVERY SMALLEST THING

He was about fifty years old. Poor in the goods of this world, persecuted, denied, vituperated, he had dedicated his genius to the praise of Happiness. I recall that Albert Soergel, in his work *Dichtung der Zeit*, compared him with Whitman. The comparison is not exact. Whitman celebrates the universe in a preliminary, abstract almost indifferent manner; Jerusalem takes joy in each thing, with a scrupulous and exact love. He never falls into the error of enumerations and catalogues. ...

I was severe with him; I permitted neither my compassion nor his glory to make me relent. I had come to understand many years that there is nothing on earth that does not contain the seed of a possible hell; a face, a word, a compass, a cigarette advertisement are capable of driving a person mad if he is unable to forget them. ... I decided to apply this principle to the disciplinary regimen of our camp ...

I do not know whether Jerusalem understood that, if I destroyed him, it was to destroy my compassion. (Borges 2000, 176 & 177.)¹

These passages derive from a short story by Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) entitled '*Deutsches Requiem*', one of the few Latin American contributions to what might be termed 'Holocaust literature' (Roskies & Diamant 2012). The story is the fictional last testament of Otto Dietrich zur Linde, subdirector of the Tarnowitz concentration camp,

awaiting execution for his war crimes. Linde feels no fear, expresses no remorse, merely rehearses a justification for the Nazi assault on Judaism, and glorifies the violence – ‘we revelled in the great days and nights of a successful war’ (Borges 2000, 177) – as necessary world-transforming work that must never to be distilled by compassion. Making concrete this ideology, Linde reflects on ‘the eminent poet David Jerusalem from Breslau’ (176), a poet of ‘every smallest thing’,² the meticulous and even loving chronicler of precisely that detail over which Linde would insist riding roughshod. For Linde, such attention to the detail is ‘soft’, a threat to the greater project, not least in the depths of ‘the camp’³: it is not uncommon ‘in a wretched cell, where insidious deceitful mercy tempts us with ancient tenderness’ (176). The implication is that much of Linde’s operation at Tarnowitz was designed precisely to bulldoze such detail, the ‘[m]any things [that] will have to be destroyed in order to construct the New Order’ (179), and his particularly severe treatment of Jerusalem evidently encapsulated a wish to expunge all residual compassion from his own soul.⁴

This opening perfectly captures the drift and purpose of my arguments to follow, as well as having echoes in the theoretical track that I will take with the assistance of the German philosopher-aesthetic critic Theodor Adorno, for whom the violent *indifference* of the Nazi death camp is pivotal. His invocation never to ‘write poetry’ again ‘after Auschwitz’, one that he subsequently qualifies in various ways that might be termed (deploying his own naming) ‘micrology’, is the chief thread tying together my attempt below at contriving materials for a *critical* geohumanities. Indeed, my simple claim is that Adorno’s micrology is profoundly geographical, demanding the most careful lingering with the micro-spatial assemblage of details – of bodies and things, peoples and places – in order to capture those intimate horrors, for instance of the Holocaust, so easily (and understandably) over-looked in the haste to see bolder sweeps, clearer lessons, lasting salvations. I join hands here with the remarkable efforts of Kearns (2014), in his borrowings from Primo Levi, perhaps the pre-eminent Holocaust writer and one for whom, indeed, the details have always mattered. Moving seamlessly from the micrology of a hay-shed, a small material survival of Auschwitz III, into reconstructing the overall machinery (and words) of the Holocaust, Kearns provides the dual biopolitical and geopolitical framing for my own, more partial reflections on a geopoetry⁵ of violence and wounds. Commencing with a critical reading of poetry by the geographer, James Wreford Watson, which he self-consciously positioned against the Holocaust, I then follow Adorno’s convolutions around poetry and Holocaust, addressing his micrological resolution and how that might be mapped on to the poetry of Heinrich Heine, the focus of one short essay by Adorno. In conclusion, I summarise these manoeuvres, as well as returning briefly to Levi and his geographical interlocutors, to wonder about what might be cast as a species of ‘applied micrology’ in the poetic-geographical realm.

‘THE WOUNDS OF LOVE’:

TRANSCENDING HOLOCAUSTS?

'James Wreford Watson [1915-1990] was a geographer and a poet', states Guy M. Robinson (1997, 106), elaborating that 'Watson can be accurately described as a geographer-poet' (108).⁶ A pioneer of regional geography attuned to literary sources and style (Johnston 1993, 326-327; Robinson 1997, 110-111), as well as innovating with ideas about how social geography should take seriously 'social distance' (Philo 1991; Robinson 1997, 109-110; Withers 2008, 109), Wreford Watson held the Chair of Geography at the University of Edinburgh from 1953 to 1983. He authored four books of poetry under the semi-pseudonym James Watson,⁷ one of which, *The Wounds of Love* (1985), initially attracted my notice for a previous paper (Philo 2005) when recovering what geographers have previously authored about violence and, more specifically, the phenomena of wounds, wounding and being wounded. Elsewhere in this paper I had taken 'literary-critical' and 'anthropological detours', gleaning from diverse authors (eg. Das 1995; Ledbetter 1996; Winnberg 2003) the value of the researcher-writer accessing 'secret histories' inscribed on the 'bodies and souls' of the wounded. At stake was a narrowing of the gulf between researcher-writer – perhaps even the wounders too – and the wounded, purposefully creating a space for precisely that conjoint 'one-body compassion' (Leder 1990) so strenuously crushed by Linde in the Borges short story.

Although unexamined in my 2005 paper, Wreford Watson's poetry in *The Wounds of Love* arguably remains distant from such compassion, and it is hence an instructive counter-point for the trajectory of reasoning in my current piece. *The Wounds of Love* was clearly intended as a work of Christian poetry, with the Cross and (tellingly) Crown of Thorns, primary Christian symbols, prominent on the cover (**Figure 1**). His parents being Scottish Presbyterian missionaries, 'Watson's background ... was reflected in his strong religious convictions and perhaps also in his lecturing style, which had more than a little of the preacher about it' (Robinson 1997, 107). 'Wreford believed that students should be well educated by *the* Professor before they graduated for jobs in the outside world' (in Howell *et al* 2008: 131; original emphasis), with students having to 'Rise for the Professor' when he entered and on no account being permitted to leave until he had finished what might be construed as his 'sermon'. 'As a Presbyterian,' he would 'have had a childhood of hellfire and brimstone, redemption (or possibilities thereof) [and] mortification of the flesh,' remarks Charles Withers (2016, pers.comm.); and such a snapshot does fit well with the evidence of the poems in *The Wounds of Love*. There may be a theological reading of these poems that stresses Christ's shedding of blood on the cross as an act of love for all humans, a supreme act of 'compassion' wherein He *shares* their bodily suffering.⁸ Nonetheless, another reading might conclude that there is little here to suggest the variety of 'one-body-compassion' proposed by Leder (1990); and that Wreford Watson's poetry reveals less a compassionate attitude to wounding and attending to wounds, in an everyday scene, more a bloodthirsty appetite for wounding as

pivotal to the ideological project of a zealous, 'puritanical' Christianity (one unforgiving of vulnerability, weakness, being wounded). Even if leaning towards the first interpretation, however, there remains something instructive for what follows in how Wreford Watson introduces and then executes his poetry, as I will now reflect.

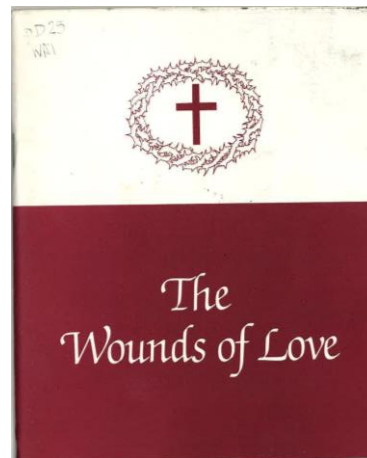


Figure 1: Cover of *The Wounds of Love* ([Wreford] Watson 1985)

Wreford Watson's preface to his pamphlet of poetry describes how his career as a professional geographer affords insight into the 'terrestrial unity of things', but also to how this insight became challenged by a world in which 'the wolf and the lamb co-exist', where 'disorder and pain' prevails (Wreford Watson 1985, 7). As he continues, with a reference of special note for what follows later:

Man's [*sic.*] power of betterment may have climbed to a height but his guilt in debasement has fallen to an all-time low. Rarely has man seen anything so cruel as the holocausts of twentieth century persecution and war. Here was a profoundly disturbing thing that crooked the intelligibility of the world. (7)

For him, though, the answer, the assurance of 'intelligibility', ultimately derives from divine sources, and more especially from 'the wounds of love' found in the figure of 'Christ, wounded for me': 'The efficacy of His august anguish is a profound mystery, but one that somehow reconciles the particularity of suffering with the universality of order' (7). It is not remotely to suggest that Wreford Watson excuses the wounds inflicted by the likes of the Holocaust, but such wounds are set within what is taken as a greater pattern, a transcendent intelligibility, whose interpretation teeters on the brink of positioning such abuses and pain primarily as earthly grist to a heavenly mill. As I will show below, such a move to situate the Holocaust in a larger, transcendent pattern is readily open to sustained critique; and, while caution is needed with such a remark, the distance between such a response to the Holocaust and the fictitious stance of Linde –

always with an eye on the transcendent, the world-shifting, some grander play of power, resistance and resolution – is maybe not that great.

Returning to Wreford Watson's pamphlet, what assaults me is indeed the sheer bloodlust in many of the poems from *The Wounds of Love*. Poem after poem overflow with savage wounds, weeping sores, blood running free. 'Christ's bloody sweat' nourishes the world: 'it took *wounds* to wet the withered earth,' a 'bleeding [that] would drench the world, the world would green itself again' (from *Gethsemane*, 15). In this guise, Christ's wounds, but also maybe wounds more generally, are required, an essential part of the Bible story, of pain and redemption; and the author, picturing himself as Jesus whipped towards the Cross, invites that pain, welcoming those wounds, as a penitent desiring to be lashed: 'Lay the whip on me: O do your worst – [with] this wounding ...' (from *The Flogging*, 28). Moreover, 'these wounds shall – O world, become all wonder yet – become the all beautiful' (from *The Crucifixion*, 33). 'The greatest conflagration in the world – the revolution of the wound' is how Wreford Watson captures Jesus on the Cross, at which sight 'let men catch their breath – at wounds so awesome they make – their wounds a mere mote' (from *The Crucifixion*, 34). The later poems in the pamphlet rage in a similar vein, but with the focus increasingly shifting towards how Jesus's wounds refresh all humanity, wash away the secular wounds and pains of everyday societies; so that, as part of a divine plan, the people of the earth 'may come out – of the dark wood of our feral blood' and 'may from the wounds of love – [make] a richer, freer, truer world' (from *The Final Things*, 71). The direction of travel is clearly that announced in Wreford Watson's preface, in that wounds of all kinds – those of the crucified Jesus, but so too those inflicted by humans on their fellow humans, including mental or spiritual pain – are to be understood as serving a purpose, featuring in an epic narrative of 'fall', 'overcoming' and 'redemption'.⁹ Such an attempt to convert wounding of all stripes and magnitudes into the passages of a biblical morality play comprises one instance, admittedly minor but still instructive, of why Adorno proposed his prohibition on poetry 'after Auschwitz', a prohibition to which I will now turn.

'THERE CAN BE NO MORE POETRY AFTER AUSCHWITZ': ADORNO AND WOUNDED POETRY

Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) is a major if now somewhat 'unfashionable', even neglected figure of cultural criticism, philosophy and letters from the last century.¹⁰ A member of the so-called Frankfurt School of critical theory who, as a German of Jewish descent with leftist-Marxian sympathies, was forced into exile during the Nazi era, eventually ending up in California after a spell in Oxford, before eventually returning to Germany with a mission to prevent backsliding towards the ideological conditions that had permitted the Nazi debacle in the first place. His *oeuvre* only makes sense within this context: it is thoroughly marked by the Nazi-inflicted horrors of the mid-twentieth

century, which pressed upon him so personally (and very directly led to the death of his one-time mentor, Benjamin, in which connection Adorno refers to ‘Hitler’s executioners’: Adorno 1967c, 229). With Horkheimer, Adorno authored *Dialectic of Enlightenment* ([1944, 1947] 1972), an impassioned cry against the tendency within European Enlightenment to decay into ‘myth’, darkness, viciousness and violence. Initially published in 1944, this key text of twentieth-century Western thought was unmistakably railing against the Nazi perversions of Enlightenment and modernity, with questions about anti-Semitism and fascism – and, tellingly, the latter’s manipulations of cultural media and aesthetics – heavily to the fore. In consequence, and understandably perhaps, Adorno’s sprawling written corpus is profoundly negative, captured by the title of his last master-work *Negative Dialectics* ([1966] 1973), with the impulse always being to critique, to critique the critique, to root out and subject to forensic critical analysis any manoeuvre – intellectual, aesthetic or otherwise creative – that seeks to be affirmative, to offer optimism, to speak of wholesomeness, recuperation and reconciliation (in another vocabulary, ‘to heal the wounds’). Nigel Thrift (2000, 269) once remarked that ‘[i]n Foucault country, it always seems to be raining’; and, if that be the case, in Adorno country it is always torrential, stormy, overhung with the blackest of thunder clouds.

Proceeding in this dismal vein, Adorno did indeed once propose that ‘There can be no more poetry after Auschwitz’, although in fact he never *quite* said exactly *this*, as I will explain. It is an injunction that, if taken at face value and extended to other forms of creative, even scholarly writing, does appear to foreclose on any possibility of a ‘one-body compassion’ in writing about and for wounded worlds. Nonetheless, this is not quite the full story. Rather, my argument will be that, by chasing a little more closely what Adorno *actually* said, notably as he subsequently revisited and recast his Auschwitz claim, a somewhat different conclusion can be reached: one that does, after all, suggest that there is a meaningful, maybe even urgent, task to be addressed around a poetics of memorialising pain, suffering and wounding. Moreover, I will venture that a few clues are sprinkled into Adorno’s deliberations about how such a task could be approached, and how a geographical sensibility might – necessarily, not just incidentally – be folded into the pursuit of that task. In pursuing these leads, I elaborate on a tantalisingly brief claim by Magrane (2015, 97 and Note 9, 98), himself exploring geopoetics, that Adorno’s ‘after Auschwitz’ statement should be read less ‘as a critique of poetry *per se*’, but more as a nuanced call for alternative, critical poetics which remain resolutely ‘grounded’ or even ‘earthed’.

Adorno initially made his Auschwitz poetry claim in a 1949 essay, translated into English as the first chapter in his book *Prisms* (Adorno 1967). The essay, titled in English ‘Cultural criticism and society’, was a fierce broadside against the Nazi treatment of both culture (broadly conceived) and what might, for the Nazis, pass as ‘cultural critique’ (watered down here into the likes of ‘art appreciation’). It was also evidently a diatribe

against the emerging 'culture industry' in the US, which Adorno feared to be another potential vehicle for authoritarian brain-washing, as well as against all 'weak' forms of cultural critique – wherever arising – which either stayed too close to their objects ('immanent' critique remaining locked in the empirics of a cultural product) or claimed to see so much further beyond them ('transcendent' critique veering into sweeping, possibly sentimentalist, denunciations or re-positionings). All such cultural trajectories, in both the making and the critique, struck him – only a handful of years out from WWII – as repugnant, freighted with dangers of allowing what had just occurred to recur. Hence he wrote, as the final sentences in this essay:

Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation. (Adorno 1967b, 34)

The reference to 'absolute reification' reflects a Kantian-Hegelian debate about the conversion of the world into abstract 'objects' or 'categories' that can be named and analysed, a moment of 'intellectual progress', but then alludes to the dangers of such de-contextualised – we might add, de-sensitised – objectification becoming the lode-stone of 'the mind' (of intellectual and creative life). Adorno's tricky philosophical-critical position throughout his career was urging the need to stay *with* the substantive contents of the object – Auschwitz *as* Auschwitz, maybe – rather than abstracting away from them, thereby letting matters descend into 'self-satisfied contemplation,' while *also* subjecting the worldly contexts of the objects to sustained critique (in part the residue of his Marxian historical materialism).

There are many issues coded into this passage, then, but a basic (and powerful) reading is one that simply says something like:

To persist, after Auschwitz, in the production of monuments of the very culture that produced Auschwitz ... is to participate in the perpetuation of that barbaric culture and to participate in the process (reification) that renders fundamental criticism of that culture literally unthinkable. (Oard 2011, n.p.)

The Auschwitz allusion chillingly conveys the barbarism endemic to the Nazi regime's treatment of culture, society and those peoples apparently not fitting properly into an envisaged perfection of culture and society. 'Poetry' appears to stand in for the final construct of 'self-satisfied contemplation,' meanwhile, and, in its coupling with Auschwitz, the warning is unleashed that such an *uncritical* poetic practice, or uncritical literary or intellectual practice, is closely compounded with fascism and its gruesome machinations. There is probably a narrower target as well, reflecting Adorno's ongoing battle against a Heideggerian poetics – of 'shelteredness', dwelling, rusticity, agrarianism,

provinciality – which he took as celebrating a ‘jargon of authenticity’ complicit with the Nazi project (Adorno 2003, esp.20, 40-48), what Heidegger himself called ‘the utopia of a half-poetic intellect’ (on 43). There are sizeable issues here with a substantial geographical inflection, not least in the poetic spatialising of authenticity – of what is supposedly inherent in dwelling authentically – as indicated by the nouns listed above, but such issues require a sustained treatment impossible in the present paper (but see Harrison 2007a).

Adorno returned to his Auschwitz poetry claim in a radio talk of 1962, a written version of which appeared soon after before being translated into English with the title ‘Commitment’ (Adorno 1992b). Beginning with the statement ‘I do not want to soften my statement that it is barbaric to continue to write poetry after Auschwitz,’ here he continues by adding that ‘it expresses, negatively, the impulse that animates committed literature’ (87). ‘Committed literature’, for Adorno, is writing that ‘works towards an attitude,’ opposed to ‘a spectator-like neutrality’ (79): it is writing that is critical, that never evades the question of whether ‘culture’ (as in poetry, literature, art) ‘as such should exist at all’ (87) in a society which has ‘regressed’ into ‘breaking the bones’ of its weakest members. The reasons for such a question are laid out with chilling honesty, as Adorno ponders what is at stake in creating ‘art’ (or ‘poetry’) out of suffering, even if the creators have themselves been victims:

The victims are turned into works of art, tossed out to be gobbled up by the world that did them in. The so-called artistic rendering of the naked physical pain of those who were beaten down with rifle butts contains, however distantly, the possibility that pleasure can be squeezed from it. The morality that forbids art to forget this for a second slides off into abyss of its opposite. The aesthetic stylistic principle, and even the chorus’ solemn prayer, make the unthinkable appear to have had some meaning; it becomes transfigured, something of its horror removed. (88)

The possibility that some pleasure (aesthetic, ethical, intellectual) may be derived from the art or poetry of victimhood, from the aesthetic rendering of the wounds, is rigorously exposed. Yet Adorno pushes deeper still, in his characteristically *negative*-dialectical fashion, to expose the unavoidable ‘parasitism’ – my word, not his – attending any moments of *positive* (healing, therapeutic) meaning drawn from the record of prior suffering or wounding. Thus, pushed to the extreme, every lesson arguably learned, every intimation of goodness in the badness from which ‘we’ might garner strength, every ‘cloud’s silver lining’, is parasitic upon, even arguably complicit with, what has gone before. In some of the most uncompromising critical text ever penned, Adorno continues:

When even genocide becomes cultural property in committed literature, it becomes easier to continue complying with the culture that gave rise to the murder. One characteristic of such literature is virtually ever-present: it shows us humanity blossoming in so-called extreme situations, and in fact precisely there, and at times this becomes a dreary metaphysics that affirms the horror, which has been justified

as a 'boundary situation', by virtue of the notion that authenticity of human being is manifested there. (88-89)

This passage, which adds the disconcerting image of a 'cozy existential atmosphere [where] the distinction between victim and executioner becomes blurred' (89), exactly as Linde feared, is truly world-upside-down-turning. It surgically strikes at what so often *is* the justification for engaging with the words and experiences of victims: namely, that even here 'we' can detect shards of 'humanity', of courage, dignity, recalcitrance or even maybe the momentary kindness of the gaoler-executioner, which somehow redeems the situation. 'We' engage with the pain, the suffering, the wounding; and, magically, 'we' start to feel better, a salve is laid over us, a redemption sought. In a way, it is this structure of meaning that circulates in Wreford Watson's poetry: the more wounding, the more battering by whip and world, the more 'we' can access the 'love of God', the ultimate salve or redemption. Seen through such lenses, it becomes crystal-clear what Adorno means by the 'barbarism' of continuing to write poetry after Auschwitz.

This is not the end of the matter, however, since Adorno is still alert to other lines of reasoning, even as he then bites back at them (his negative-dialectical drive would expect nothing less). Hence, even before the above two quoted passages, he avows that 'literature' (art, poetry) must 'not surrender to cynicism [including his own?] merely by existing after Auschwitz' (88), not least because, in spite of all the perils, there *does* remain an unavoidable, vital, critical function to perform which is, after all, that of remembering:

The abundance of real suffering permits no forgetting; Pascal's theological '*On ne doit plus dormir*' ['Sleeping is no longer permitted'] should be secularised. But that suffering – what Hegel calls the awareness of the affliction – also demands the existence of the very art it forbids; hardly anywhere else does suffering still find its own voice, a consolation that does not immediately betray it. (88)

A somewhat different logic is advanced here: a demand for constant vigilance, called forth by ensuring a constant presence of the suffering endured by those who went before: an active remembering, a living archiving, which does not permit the cultural critic to 'fall asleep' on the job. This move is to invoke and deploy poetry 'after Auschwitz' – which might indeed be the poetry *of* Auschwitz, authored by its survivors – as part of an ongoing critical project, not necessarily a positive one of reconstruction, of making new alternatives, but rather a critical-negative one (a stance of 'never again'). Intriguingly, Adorno finds his exemplars in '[t]he most significant artists of the [post-war] period,' with the 'uncompromising radicalism of their works,' often 'denounced as formalism,' being exactly what 'endows them with a frightening power that impotent poems about the victims lack' (88). Thus, he invokes the great modernists such as Brecht or Picasso, rather than the poetry of or about victims, as the model for such a 'voicing' of suffering; and, in this guise, we might hesitate (as have others reading Adorno) before a certain cultural

elitism that potentially distances itself from the immediacy of the horrors, the grim situated geographies of the wounding.

Adorno returned one more time to the 'after Auschwitz' problematic, and now such an elite distancing largely disappears: the work in question is his late master-work *Negative Dialectics*, mentioned before, originally published in 1966 as *Negative Dialektik* and then in an English translation of 1973. Late in this mammoth text, he writes as follows, yielding some of the words borrowed for the title of my paper:

After Auschwitz, our feelings resist any claims of the positivity of existence as sanctimonious, as wronging the victims; they balk at squeezing any kind of sense, however bleached, out of the victims' fate. And these feelings do have an objective side after events that make a mockery of any construction of immanence as endowed with a meaning radiated by an affirmatively posited transcendence. (Adorno 1973, 361)

Echoing his earlier formulation, Auschwitz again stands in for the horror of the Nazi era, and Adorno is consistent with his younger self in resisting any attempt to extract positive, affirmative meaning from the abuses of this camp or period: he 'balk[s] at squeezing any kind of sense, however bleached, out of the victims' fate.' Such a balking runs alongside broader, complex philosophical claims being made about *not* finding – and believing it to be abhorrent even to try finding – some radiant transcendence (about, say, human dignity, resilience, truth) rising above and beyond the empirical facts immanent to camp and period. In hard words, Adorno casts what happened at Auschwitz as a quantitative erasure, a 'level[ling] off' (362), a replacing of 'the individual' with 'the specimen' that can be liquidated at a moment's notice. The Marxist in him also prompts an equation with the profiteering logics of capitalism, *indifferent* to the individual, and with 'the coldness, the basic principle of bourgeois subjectivity, without which there could have been no Auschwitz' (363).

On the subject of whether there could or should be poetry 'after Auschwitz', Adorno now proceeds further with recalibrating his thinking from the original 1949 polemic. 'Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream,' he admits, adding that 'hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems' (362). Moreover, '[a] new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon unfree [hu]mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen' (365). Such a remark repeats the insistence about 'sleeping not being permitted': about avoiding Auschwitz, gliding past it, seeking 'religious consolation' (367: cf. Wreford Watson's muse, as discussed earlier), or returning to the philosophical poetics obtaining before Auschwitz and maybe thereby paving a route for its return (and here Heidegger is once again in Adorno's cross-hairs). To prevent such dangerous complacency, Adorno offers sketchy gestures towards what a wide-awake post-Auschwitz poetry might entail and demand. He calls for attention to '[t]he somatic, unmeaningful stratum of life [as] the

stage of suffering, of the suffering which, in the camps, without any consolation, burned every soothing feature out of the mind, and of culture' (365). The poetic response should precisely engage such embodied horror, denying meaning and consolation, and confronting what might usually be repressed (in a loosely psychoanalytic idiom). Provocatively, he takes the image of the child fascinated by the smells issuing from 'the flayer's zone, from carcasses,' not to furnish material to serve some higher, philosophical concern – perhaps to illuminate some 'ontologically pure being named Death' – but, rather, 'for the sake of that which the stench of the cadavers expresses and [which] we are fooled about by their transfiguration into remains' (366).¹¹ In equating camp and slaughterhouse, together with his reference to the child as a phenomenological opening to such 'banal decay',¹⁰ Adorno opens a poetic sensibility that pays intense attention to the details of the wounding; that crafts a sensory encounter with the intimate, embodied spaces of the suffering, describing the wounds in hard-edged detail without gloss, excuse or consolation.

Elsewhere, harkening back to his mentor, Benjamin,¹² Adorno speaks, if briefly, of 'micrology', a compulsion to chase, disclose and scrutinise the very small, the minutely detailed, the 'scraps' of the world in its 'immediacy' and 'fullness' (here deploying terms scattered throughout Adorno 1973). Fully to unpack Adorno's thinking about micrology would necessitate a sustained brush with other notions central to Adorno's *oeuvre*, notably 'non-identity' (of the object), the 'non-conceptual', 'constellations', 'models', 'anti-systems' and maybe also 'prisms' (Adorno 1967), all of which cluster together into what might be identified as 'Adorno's geography'. For the purposes at hand, though, it will suffice to underline that Adorno sets micrology *against* thought, where 'thought' indexes the habitual Enlightenment processes of abstraction, transcendence and the like – including the 'error of enumerations and catalogues' (Borges 2000, 176) – as contrasted with an older, pre-Enlightenment version of 'metaphysics' which acquiesced in what it could *not* think, what it did *not* know, what magic or malevolence might lie beyond but still be intimated by the smallest details. In his own (tricky) words:

Represented in the inmost cell of thought is that which is unlike thought. The smallest intra-mundane traits would be of relevance to the absolute, for the micrological view cracks the shells of what, measured by the subsuming cover concept, is helplessly isolated and [instead] explodes its identity, the delusion that it is but a specimen. There is solidarity between such thinking and metaphysics at the time of its fall [under Enlightenment]. (Adorno 1973, 361)

The call is for a quite particular discipline of thought – elsewhere Adorno terms it 'non-conceptual' – profoundly responsive to the smallest details, able to split open the 'shell' of these details, peering beneath how they might otherwise be smeared into abstractions, categories and regarded only as 'specimens' for a prior grid of intelligibility. There, in the domain of the small, micrology is supposed to tarry, staying with the details, shapes, colours, smells and other prompts to the senses, discerning not some primordial essence,

but instead intimations of an ultimately ineffable state, maybe joy or maybe horror, suffusing *these* bodies with *these* things in *this* 'piece of the spatio-temporal world' (401). That, then, is 'the absolute' for a micrological sensibility, one that is alert, modest, circumspect, careful and care-*full*, ever ready to delight in the unfathomable but also to denounce the abusive. Tellingly, Adorno also writes that '[m]icrology is the place where metaphysics finds a haven from totality' (407), a remark which surely performs double-duty: situating micrology as at once a counter to both totalising intellectual life (with its concepts, systems, teleologies and other grand meaning-making artifices) and to the abuses of 'real' totalitarian regimes (of conceivably quite different persuasions). This micrology might promise a more immanent, in-the-material engagement than Adorno initially conceived in 1949 as critically valid, but it does appear to be where he finally landed in his post-Auschwitz poetic commentary, not too long before his death in 1969.

BY WAY OF EXEMPLIFICATION: 'HEINE, THE WOUND'

'Adorno did not attempt to write poetry' (Hohendahl 1995, 117), but he wrote numerous essays on literary works, notably as collected in his *Notes to Literature* volumes (eg. Adorno 1991a, 1992a). One such is a piece catching my eye in relation to the theme of wounding, a talk given and then originally published in 1956 with the translated title of 'Heine the Wound'. The focus here is Heinrich Heine (1897-1856): a German who lived half of his life in France; a Jew who was baptised into Christianity before returning to his original faith when dying; and a poet held in high but sometimes disputed regard as part of a European Romantic canon of lyric poetry which can be sung or set to music (Atkins, 1929; Butler, 1956; Feise 1963). Marking the centenary of Heine's death, Adorno (1991b, 80) suggests that to consider Heine is necessarily 'to speak about a wound ... and what has been repressed, especially in Germany, since the Second World War'. The complexity of Heine's identity has been traced across the swirling cultural-political geographies of nineteenth-century Europe (Gilman and Hohendahl, 1991), and his Jewishness in German lands, even as 'the baptised Jew' (Butler 1956, Chap.3), has occasioned reflection on the fate of his reputation at the hands of anti-Semitism. In the charged context of a post-Auschwitz world, Adorno asks what it means to read Heine's poetry as part of the still-open 'wound' of violent anti-Semitism, a wound that should not be allowed to heal in any comfortable relapse to prior orthodoxies. In a chapter about the Heine essay, Hohendahl (1995, Chap.5) argues that Adorno himself betrays lingering reservations about Heine's challenge to the 'purity' or even 'authenticity' of German poetic language, perhaps as aggravated by Heine enjoying commercial success with lyric poetry: 'Heine could be called a precursor of the culture industry' (Hohendahl 1995, 107). Nonetheless, for Adorno (1991b, 80), Heine's alleged 'guilt' in these respects, as alleged by German critics circa 1900, 'became an alibi for those of his enemies whose hatred for the Jewish

middleman [*sic.*] ultimately paved the way for the unspeakable horror'. Heine's poetry is thereby set in a longer-term Holocaust narrative, its history, reception and positioning forever cast in the shadow of Auschwitz: 'Heine's aura has been painful and guilt-laden, as though it were bleeding' (80).

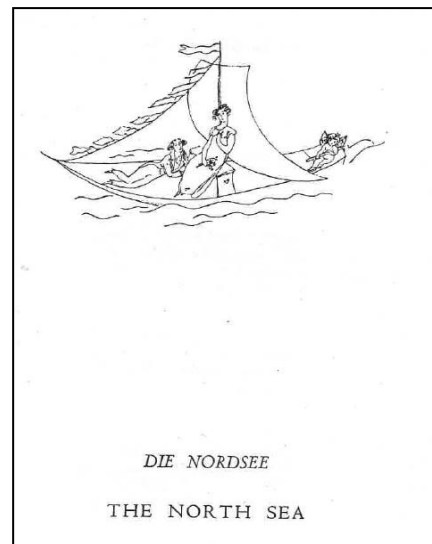


Figure 2: Illustration in *The North Sea and Other Poems* (Heine 1947 [trans.])

Before tackling Adorno's reading of Heine, it is worth elaborating on Heine's life and works, not least to note both its geography and the geographical themes present in his poetry. Early biographies of Heine are organised more or less explicitly around the places where he stayed (Atkins 1929; Butler 1956), notably the place of his birth, Düsseldorf, sometimes called a 'Franco-German city' on the Rhine (Atkins 1929, 14) and the place of his death, Paris, where serious illness eventually confined him to his home – even to his bed or mattress, which he termed his *Matratzengruft* or 'mattress-grave' (Kruse 2002) – and hence afforded him such a different experience of this city as that enjoyed by the *flâneurs* and later by Walter Benjamin (who, with Adorno, discovered Heine's poetry of and implicating Paris: Phelan 2002). In the mid-1820s, he visited the island of Norderney, off the North Sea coast of Germany: 'dwelling in the cottages of the fishermen, and coming into the closest and most intimate relations with them' (Atkins 1929, 66), while '[t]he sea cast a spell over Heine' (Butler 1956: 38), he subsequently composed his *Nordsee* (North Sea) cycle of poems with content, shades and word-plays capturing both the life-ways of the fisherfolk and the restless landscapes of sea and storm (**Figure 2**). Additionally, Heine was a travel-writer of sorts, authoring a series of so-called *Travel-Sketches* or *Travel-Pictures*, commencing in 1826 with the *Harz Journey*, a 'walking tour through the Harz' which was the source for a 'mock guide-book description' of the Göttingen region,

from library to historical hall to silver mines to a mountain idyll (61). Here was ‘a real journey with a real route; a break-away from the prison-house of a town’ (Atkins 1929, 67), including a night in a miner’s cottage, although realism, fairy-tale, myth and philosophical disquisition all fuse together in the process. This geopoetic excursion arguably set the pattern for Heine’s later creative writing, including the *Nordsee* cycle, explicitly positioned as one of the *Travel-Sketches*, but what also intruded in later pieces – based on travels across the lands of Germany, Italy and elsewhere – was a political commentary animated by a sustained opposition to suffering. Tellingly, Butler (1956, 4) advises that Heine’s politics, like the fictional poet Jerusalem, was always infused with ‘compassion, the deepest of all his emotions’.

It would be neat for the purposes of the present essay to be able to report that Heine’s poetry was lovingly micrological, but that would be a stretch. There are detailed ‘descriptions of landscapes and peoples’ (Feise 1963, ix) throughout the poems comprising the *Travel-Sketches* – ‘On the mountain stands the cottage/Where the good old miner stays/Over it the hemlock rustles/And the moon sheds golden rays’ (from *Mountain Idyll*, in Heine 1963, 57); ‘Beside the pale sea shore/I sat alone with melancholy thoughts./The sun dipped deeper down and cast/His burning rays athwart the water,/And the white-tipped distant waves,/Urged on by the flood,/Foamed and rippled, nearer and nearer – ’ (from *Evening Twilight*, in Heine 1947, 65) – but these details inter-loop with more casual evocations of affect, sense, belief, doubt and critique. Heine’s brushes with both history and geography are hence pockets of detail set in more gestural sweeps, something that one critic describes as a ‘cartoonish’ elicitation of ‘history in nutshells’ (Reed 1991), while another remarks on ‘troublesome whimsicalness’ crafting ‘a romantically coloured showroom of world history in ... poems about faraway lands and ages past’ (Steinecke 1991, 144). Fairley (1954, 169), meanwhile, characterises Heine’s ‘comic-poetic survey of the world’. Other scholars rework such interpretations, however, and offer a sharper account of Heine as a ‘lost cosmopolite’, his own identity wandering between Germany, France and elsewhere, who arrives at ‘an openness to the world’ which, from the perspective of the un-homed, rises above parochial circumstance to adopt a broader, critical vision (Steinecke 1991 esp.158-159). This point about a critical vision is important, weaving into his geography, for Heine located himself as less a poet, more ‘an honest soldier in the war for the liberation of [hu]mankind’ (in Butler 1956, 75-76): the ‘great task of our time’ being ‘emancipation. Not only that of the Irish, Greeks, Frankfort Jews, West Indian blacks, and such oppressed races, but the emancipation of the whole world’ (in Atkins 1929, 105).¹³

These themes are integrated in an essay by Goetschel (2002), who anatomises Heine’s ‘joyous philosophy’, informed by Spinoza, wherein ‘Heine’s anti-idealist reinstatement of the flesh, of sensualism and individualism in its irreducible particularity exerts a recalcitrant reticence against normative prescriptions of philosophy of a

Hegelian – or, for that matter – any other high-flying persuasion’ (Goetschel 2002, 141). The appeal to ‘irreducible particularity’ is stirring, easily chiming with claims above about micrology as a counter to the mischief of totalising thought, and Heine is portrayed as fashioning a ‘poetics ... writing at the interstices’ which is a delicate filament in ‘philosophy’s counter-history’ (141). Goetschel elaborates in evidence diverse substantive features of Heine’s poetry: the attention to assortments of nightingales, mice, lizards, worms and other animals, ‘the menageries in Heine’ (Fairley, 1954, 112); or to the Egyptian obelisk grandly, symbolically erected in a Paris square which ‘may also lead to the release of ‘little poisonous bugs’ (Goetschel, 2002, 144); or to the ‘flowers [which] ... express the particular in its irreducible difference’ (147). Echoing poet Jerusalem’s fictional evasion of the cataloguing imperative, the flowers ‘remind us ... that beyond the rationality of the Linnean system of taxonomy, which dissects and categorises the unique phenomenon of the living flower ... , there always remains a stubborn rest that resists subsumption to the general’ (147). Moreover, Goetschel stresses ‘the philosophically critical impulse at the heart of Heine’s work’ (139), an impulse that endeared Heine to nineteenth-century radicals, and which – crucially for this essay – also points him in the direction of Adorno and Frankfurt critical theory:

His persistently critical gesture prefigures in its insistence on a critically conceived recourse to individuality the decisive turn [that] critical theory will come to take in Benjamin, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Adorno. ... Indeed, Heine’s playful exhibition of the contradictions of real life brings home the non-identity between concepts and what they seek to comprehend, thus prefiguring the critical insights of Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*. (141 and 142)

Always aware of ‘an ever-different world inaccessible to the powers of reason alone’ (144), never straying far from ‘the ugly face of reality’ or ‘life’s base materiality’ (150), it seems that Heine’s poetry – even when written simply, allusively, even comically – remains in the neighbourhood of Adorno’s child drawn to the smells of ‘the flayer’s zone’.

These reflections return the essay to Adorno’s own micrological reading of Heine as the ‘wound’, the awkward detail or even poisonous bug, confronting fascist tendencies in culture, politics and society. Adorno (1991b, 83) emphasises Heine’s capacity to ‘manipulate [language] like an instrument’, an easy virtuosity which does risk a superficial deployment of simple, sometimes colloquial language to achieve dramatic ends possibly with commercial benefit. While others like Hohendahl (1995) might challenge such a depiction, Adorno himself traces how Heine’s ‘failings’ as a pure poet have been precisely what permits his words to be so effectively converted into songs: ‘songs in which the brittleness of the banal ... is used to express what is most real, in the form of a wild, unleashed lament’ (83). Specifically, Adorno examines Heine’s poem *The Return Home*, also known as *Lueneberg*, after Lüneburg, a town in the German state of Lower Saxony where Heine’s parents had moved and which he never enjoyed visiting (Atkins 1929, 69). Below – retaining the poem’s original form – I reproduce an English

translation of these stanzas, slightly different from the English version used in the translation of Adorno's piece (in Adorno 1991b, 84-85), the latter from a translation of 1934 and the one shown below from a translation of 1963 (even if it arguably sounds less modern):¹⁴

My heart, my heart is dreary
In the merry radiance of May,
I lean against the linden
On the bastion old and grey.

Below flows the blue water
Quietly in the moat,
Whistling a tune and fishing
A young lad rows his boat.

Beyond in gayest colours
Some tiny objects stand,
Pavilions and gardens and people,
Woods, oxen and meadow land.

On the greensward maids bleach linen,
Frolic and leap around;
The millwheel scatters diamonds,
I hear its humming sound.

There is the old grey tower,
A sentry box below;
A young red-coated soldier
Is pacing to and fro.

He's playing with rifle,
Which glints in the sunset's red,
He shoulders and presents it –
I wish he would shoot me dead. (Heine 1963 [trans.], 69)

The poem is largely a poetic-geographical description, evoking an historic castle town set within a country setting, with scattered details provided of 'tiny objects' – buildings, green spaces, animals, skipping 'maids', the boy in his boat – all implying a busy but peaceful local life-world. Even the penultimate stanza, introducing the tower, sentry box and pacing soldier, melds into this tranquil scene; but then there is the shock of the final stanza, as the dreary-hearted poet announces his wish to be shot dead by the young soldier. The geopoetic micrology here, if such it be, leaps into the threat of violence, unexplained, meaningless and dislocating the cozy picture. Adorno (1991b, 85) identifies Heine's 'attempt to draw estrangement itself into the sphere of intimate experience', and – anticipating what Steinecke (1991) claims about Heine the 'lost cosmopolite' – also positions the poem as an expression of 'homelessness', a bitter cry against the wounding of all peoples but also a tentative plea for better:

Now that the destiny which Heine sensed has been fulfilled literally [with the Holocaust], however, the homelessness has also become everyone's homelessness; all

human beings have been as badly injured in their beings and their languages as Heine the outcast was. His words stand in for their words: there is no longer any homeland other than a world in which no one would be cast out any more, the world of a genuinely emancipated humanity. (Adorno 1991b, 85)

Heine's own emancipatory ambitions are recalled, in a manner perhaps oddly unbleak for Adorno, but the final lessons to learn for the present essay are how Adorno reads this geographical poem – arguably itself an exercise in wounded geography, with flashes of micrological intent – to revisit his problematic about what poetry *can* (still) do in the horizon of Auschwitz. Heine the wound, his poetry as wound, this particular poem as wound, all ignited with geographical charge: such is what Adorno, joining hands with Heine and the fictional Jerusalem, recognises as the 'poetic territory' (Peters 2002, 56)¹⁵ of anti-totality, of anti-fascism.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The spirit and purpose of my essay should now be clear, in that I wish to bring Adorno's critical theory into the geohumanities, perhaps to suggest a *critical* geohumanities which might operate, at least partially, in the negative tenor of 'never again': of arranging thoughts and actions, to paraphrase Adorno (1973, 365), so that the horrors of fascism cannot recur, in Germany or elsewhere. Specifically, I have considered how one aspect of an anti-fascist geography might reside in taking seriously Adorno's agonising about what it might mean to write poetry 'after Auschwitz', and in following his halting steps towards micrological reconstructions that insist on staying with the suffering – with the details, 'every smallest thing', where the 'tiny objects stand' – rather than with either the abstraction of cataloguing or the meaning-grabs of transcendence. Of course, Adorno knows that he cannot *only* remain dwelling in the details, but his further move is always to keep the wounds close, to keep their bleeding alive, as a constant check on the excesses of the present. Such was – *is* – the imperative of his demand for 'education after 'education after the Holocaust' (Hohendahl 1995, Chap.3),¹⁶ which needs to be much more than *just* exercises in poetry, creative writing or poetic-literary criticism, even as such aesthetic labour has a role to play. To underline, such labour undoubtedly lacks the gleam of positivity, of responding excitedly to the 'push' of the world in the hunt to discern new possibilities, energies and geographies; although it can perhaps proceed in tandem as a cautious, slower, uncertain and more sceptical cousin for whom banal matters are less 'vibrant' (Bennett 2010) and more wounded.

I have so far swerved the literature by geographers that most obviously shares ground with my essay,¹⁷ chiefly because my emphasis here – on what I might term Adorno's 'applied micrology' in the service of writing anti-fascist poetic or critical tracts – departs from the interests of Paul Harrison and Richard Carter-White, with their own deep questioning of how a witness to the horrors of Auschwitz (or equivalent) can ever

give voice and word to the violent phenomenology of what they faced. Harrison's (2007b, 2010, 2011) disquisitions on the limits of a witness's language – but also on how the ultimate *non*-relatability of their experiences still demands a 'response', however pathetic, from listeners – can only now, after two decades of non-representational geography, be understood for what they signal: namely, the disenchanting, non-magical or negative side of what is often lost in the rush of recent human geography (non-representational, post-phenomenological, practice-based, magical Marxist) to affirm the enchantment of worlds (Woodyer and Geoghegan 2013; cf. Harrison 2015; Philo 2017b). In this mood, Harrison definitely shakes hands with Adorno, even if his conceptual reference-points differ.¹⁸

Carter-White (2009, 2012) provides exacting accounts of Auschwitz testimony – how it is performed, as much as how it holds up as empirical evidencing – that cut even closer to the grain of my Adorno-inflected orientation (and, indeed, at the outset of his 2009 paper he acknowledges the Adorno 'after Auschwitz' debates). As with Harrison, Carter-White's intellectual compass deviates from my attraction to Adorno's critical theory, but there are parallels in where we end up standing. His objection to 'totalising forms of knowledge that render the [extreme] event [such as Auschwitz] transparent, ... bounding it as a consistent and self-contained phenomena' (Carter-White 2012: 298) recalls Adorno's disquiet about transcendent poetry and its linkages to totality/totalitarianism. His in-depth readings of Levi's Auschwitz accounts (eg. Levi 1987, 1989) are also, arguably, in the vicinity of what Adorno eventually came to view as a legitimate modality for post-Auschwitz critical remembrance.¹⁹ Indeed, Carter-White excavates Levi's deliberately undramatic attention to detail – a carefully composed 'space of rational, unsullied testimony' (295) – which stays unsparingly with the spaces of the camp, its social relations, the 'grey zone' of collaboration between guards and inmates, and the micro-logics that led some to be 'saved' while others 'drowned' (were gassed or starved).²⁰ Maybe Levi was also in Borges's mind when he imagined the poet Jerusalem, who delighted in 'every smallest thing', and who thereby incited a compassion for the world and all of its occupants entirely antithetical to fascism.²¹ Perhaps oddly, though, the claim is that Levi's writing, rather than furnishing the evidentiary certainty demanded in the Holocaust-denier trials (Carter-White 2009), instead generated *uncertainty*, 'a landscape of paradoxical distinctions and oppositions' (Carter-White 2012: 295). He authored a refusal, as it were, to allow Auschwitz to be smoothed into simple and totalisable formulation, instead demanding that 'we' stay with Auschwitz, precisely because nothing has been permitted to resolve, to migrate 'upwards' to other spheres of meaning (such as, from earlier, Wreford Watson's 'love of God'). For Carter-White, this uncertainty is also the site of 'decisionism' for the individual, the hearer or reader, who is compelled to respond personally – and here Harrison's points about 'response-ability' lie

in the background – rather than mutedly from behind the blanket of other meanings, higher authorities, maybe God.

To my mind, while differently reasoned, Adorno's standpoint is broadly akin to Levi's, and thereby, admittedly at some remove in time and space, to that of both Carter-White and, as mentioned in the introduction, Kearns (2014). I believe that, with the intimations in *Negative Dialectics* (1973) about what needs to be done in post-Auschwitz poetry – the attention to detail, to the dreadful sensory geographies of the camp, to the living in and with 'banal decay' (as well as alongside the more obviously violent killings) – the parallels become still closer. My essay has pursued Adorno's arguments about the need for poetry, criticism and indeed philosophy that strives not for higher-level 'purity', but precisely to be 'soiled' and 'spoiled', never comforting, always disconcerting, never idealistically transcendent, always materialistically micrological. The particular articulations of poetry and geography at stake here are all about being wounded, bearing wounds, feeling wounds, remembering wounds, voicing wounds, writing wounds. These wounds are also the wounds of spaces, places, landscapes and environments; they are wounded poetic geographies that can readily be sited in the horizon of Adorno's circumspect wishes for a critical and effective poetry 'after Auschwitz'. These are poems and geographies that must indeed hesitate before 'squeezing any kind of sense, however bleached, out of the victims' fate' (Adorno, 1973, p.361); these are, in sum, poems and geographies of the senseless.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Huge thanks to Deborah Dixon and Tim Cresswell for their encouraging and insightful editorial work with me on this essay, and also to an anonymous referee. A version of this paper was presented at a workshop called *The Geographies that Wound* organised by Katherine Brickell, held at the Wellcome Collection, London, 14th September, 2015, and heartfelt thanks are due to Katherine and other participants for their generous response to my presentation.

NOTES

- ¹ Borges's short story creates two fictional characters, Linde and Jerusalem, although with undoubted 'real' historical parallels. Soegel (Sörgel) was a German literary historian who acquired Nazi sympathies; Whitman an American poet, essayist and journalist, someone regarded as significant in the 'big picture' scripting of American life and destiny, and who 'found beauty, even reassurance in death' (Poetry Foundation 2016, n.p.). Whitman is occasionally positioned as a 'geographer', fascinated by nature and maps (Roche 1998; also Gerhardt 2004). Somewhat against the grain of my reasoning in this essay, Whitman has been paralleled with Heine, another poet, discussed below (Gilman and Hohendahl 1991, 11).
- ² This phrase, 'every smallest thing', is derived from a different translation (Borges 1999, 232) of this short story, replacing 'each thing' from the first paragraph in the epigraph.
- ³ I deliberately signal 'the camp', in order to intimate that arguments from Agamben (1998, 1999, 2005) about *homo sacer* and 'states/spaces of exception' are part of this essay's undergirding. On the relations between Adorno and Agamben, see Bernstein (2004), Morgan (2009) and Vatter (2014, Chap.3).

- 4 Linde drove Jerusalem to a mental breakdown and then he died. Borges as the ‘editor’ of Linde’s final memoir edits some text, where Linde would have detailed his mistreatment of Jerusalem, because it would be too harrowing for the reader.
- 5 I use the phrases ‘geopoetics’ and ‘geopoetry’ – admittedly, quite loosely – to signal a concern for how themes or sensibilities of geography, space, place, landscape and environment may filter through, perhaps deeply structuring, works of poetry and prose (creative writing in the round). In so doing, I arguably extend the more earthed, localised, ‘nature’-facing, even ‘geological’ connotations usually associated with these terms: eg. Magrane 2015; Scottish Centre for Geopoetics 2016; Written in the Rocks 2012.
- 6 His published presidential address on ‘The soul of geography’ (Wreford Watson 1983), a plea for deploying literary sources, notably poetry, in the composing of academic geography, is a clear early statement about geohumanities. Saunders (2010, esp.446) provides an insightful reworking of debates about ‘literary geographies’, paying particular attention to ‘the spatial poetics of literature’ (what I am terming ‘geopoetics’), while Magrane (2015) sets and agenda for geography-poetry exchanges. See also the new journal *Literary Geographies* (website given in References); and also, from a literary-critical angle, Alexander and Cooper (2013) and Entwistle (2013).
- 7 ‘Professional’ academic geographers writing poetry now includes notable contributions from Cresswell (2013a, 2013b) and de Leeuw (2013, 2015). Magrane (2016) coins the phrase ‘geographer-poets’, considers Cresswell and de Leeuw, and offers some of his own geopoetry.
- 8 I am indebted to Avril Maddrell for suggesting this caution about my critical reading of Wreford Watson’s poetry: arguably, indeed, there are ‘Christian geographers’ who might account differently for his poetics of wounds, blood and God’s love.
- 9 Hints at such a perspective can also be gleaned from Wreford Watson’s geographical texts. For instance, right at the outset of his 1982 regional geography monograph, *The United States: Habitation of Hope*, it is avowed that ‘clashes of race and culture ... have divided, hurt, and yet enriched the nation’ (Wreford Watson 1982, ix: my emphases). Perhaps Wreford Watson inherits a Whitmanesque way of telling the grand-historical geography of the US, a claim circling back to the contrast noted earlier between Whitman and the fictional Jerusalem.
- 10 There is a mountain of secondary literature on Adorno, but I have particularly consulted Brunkhorst (1999), Buck-Morss (1977), Hohendahl (1995), Jameson (1990), Jay (1984), Rose (1978) and Schweppenhäuser (2009). Excellent biographies of Adorno are Jäger (2004) and Müller-Doohm (2005). Academic geography’s engagement with Adorno has, as yet, been quite minimal; but I draw inspiration from elements in Dubow (2008) and Saldanha (2013).
- 11 One among a handful of curious but telling deployments of the figure of ‘the child’ throughout Adorno’s *oeuvre*, and notably in *Negative Dialectics*: see Philo (2017a).
- 12 A fuller investigation of Adorno’s micrology would require sustained engagement with what Benjamin, described by McCole (1993, ix) as a ‘micrological investigator of culture’. Mali (2003, 228-229) explicitly names ‘Benjamin’s ‘micrology’ when characterising the latter’s ‘predilections for the tiniest and most concrete aspects of grand theories and institutions’: an approach, borrowing words from Adorno about Benjamin, enacted as ‘a kind of concretion ... whereby scant and seemingly insignificant objects – be they material (toys, stamps, postcards) or literal (proverbs, legends, quotations) – yield ... secret meanings’. Adorno (1967c, 240) remarks on Benjamin’s ‘preference ... for small or shabby objects like dust or plush’. Adorno’s own micrological practice is probably most obviously expressed in the deliberately fragmented and fractured morsels of ‘individuality’ or particularity dispersed throughout his text *Minima Moralia* (Adorno 2005).
- 13 Heine continued on the theme of ‘emancipation’: ‘especially of Europe, that has come of age, and is now wresting itself free from the leading-strings of the privileged classes, the aristocracy’ (in Atkins 1929, 105). Such views did not endear him to Europe’s landed classes, but did to those with radical sympathies, including Marx (eg. Cook 2002, 11-16; Gilman and Hohendahl 1991, 2-3).
- 14 My choice of translation is influenced by the fact that the one shown here includes the reference to ‘tiny objects’, fitting neatly with my broader micrological reasoning, whereas the version given in Adorno (1991b) simply talks of items in the scene as ‘little and bright’.
- 15 Peters (2002) is primarily concerned with Heine’s eroticism, his sexual concerns for ‘the flesh’.
- 16 Adorno himself penned an essay called ‘Education after Auschwitz’, published after his death, which opens as follows: ‘The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz should not happen again. Its priority before any other requirement is such that I believe I need not and should not justify it. ... Every debate about the ideals of education is trivial and inconsequential compared to this single ideal: never again Auschwitz’ (Adorno 1971, 1). I take this injunction as ground for crafting different species of anti-fascist geography.

- ¹⁷ Additionally, there could be more reaching across to the growing body of work on the geographies of the Holocaust, the concentration/death camps, the Jewish ghettos, Nazi spatial planning, Holocaust memorialisation, and much more: a superb new resource in this connection is Giaccaria and Minca (2016).
- ¹⁸ They both offer sustained but critical, intrigued but hesitant, engagements with Heidegger: with dwelling, Being, the Black Forest cottage, authenticity and more (Adorno, 2003; Harrison 2007). Harrison (2015, 2 and Note 2 on p.16) explicitly borrows from *Minima Moralia* (Adorno 2005).
- ¹⁹ In a *Paris Review* interview of 1994 (in Oard 2015, n.p.), Steiner was asked to assess Adorno's 'No poetry after Auschwitz' dictum. In among various points – including an Adornoian caution against the dangers of 'reduc[ing] them [the horrors] to articulate language, which in a curious way [is] to make them acceptable' – Steiner responds that 'only three or four writers' *had* managed to evade such snares in order to 'communicate something of the essential experience'. When pressed for names, he replies, '[Paul] Celan above all. Without any doubt, Primo Levi, the Italian-Jewish writer: supreme, supreme, supreme. There isn't a word out of place; it's a miracle. ... But at what cost? Celan commits suicide. Pimo Levi commits suicide.'
- ²⁰ It has been called a 'figural realism' (in Carter-White 2012, 295).
- ²¹ Heine, as explored above, might also be enlisted as a compassionate co-traveller in this regard.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T.W. 1967a. *Prisms* (trans.). Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Adorno, T.W. 1967b. Cultural criticism and society. In *Prisms* (trans.), T.W. Adorno, 17-34, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Adorno, T.W. 1967c. A portrait of Walter Benjamin. In *Prisms* (trans.), T.W. Adorno, 227-241, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Adorno, T.W. 1971. 'Education after Auschwitz', available at: <http://josswinn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/AdornoEducation.pdf> (last accessed: 15/12/16).
- Adorno, T.W. 1973. *Negative dialectics* (trans.). New York: The Seabury Press.
- Adorno, T.W. 1991a. *Notes to literature, volume one* (trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Adorno, T.W. 1991b. Heine the wound. In *Notes to literature, volume one* (trans.), T.W. Adorno, 80-85. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Adorno, T.W. 1992a. *Notes to literature, volume one* (trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Adorno, T.W. 1992b. Commitment. In *Notes to literature, volume two* (trans.), T.W. Adorno, 76-94. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Adorno, T.W. 2003. *The jargon of authenticity*. London: Routledge.
- Adorno, T.W. 2005. *Minima moralia: Reflections on a damaged life* (trans.). London: Verso.
- Adorno, T.W. and M. Horkheimer. 1972 *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (trans.). London: Verso.
- Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life* (trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, G. 1999. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The witness and the archive* (trans.). New York: Zone Books.
- Agamben, G. 2005. *State of exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Alexander, N. and D. Cooper (eds). 2013. *Poetry and geography: Space and place in Post-War poetry*. Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press.
- Atkins, H.G. 1929. *Heine*. London: George Routledge & Sons.
- Bennett, J. 2010. *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bernstein, J.M. 2004. Bare life, bearing witness: Auschwitz and the pornography of horror. *Parallax* 10:2-16.
- Borges, J.L. 1999. *Deutsches requiem*. In *Jorge Luis Borges: Collected Fictions* (trans.), J.L. Borges, 229-234. London: Penguin Books.
- Borges, J.L. 2000. *Deutsches requiem*. In *Labyrinths: Selected short stories and other writings* (trans.), J.L. Borges, 173-179. Penguin Books: London.
- Brunkhorst, H. 1999. *Adorno and critical theory*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Buck-Morss, S. 1977. *The origin of negative dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute*. New York: The Free Press.
- Butler, E.M. 1956. *Heinrich Heine: A biography*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- Carter-White, R. 2009. Auschwitz, ethics and testimony: exposure to the disaster. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27:682-699.
- Carter-White, R. 2012. Primo Levi and the genre of testimony. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37:287-300.

- Ciaccaria, P. and C. Minca (eds.). 2016. *Hitler's geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cook, R.F. 2002. Introduction. In *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine*, R.F. Cook (ed), 1-33. Rochester: Camden House.
- Cresswell, T. 2013a. *Soil*. London: Penned in the Margins.
- Cresswell, T. 2013b. Displacement: Three poems. *The Geographical Review* 103, 285-287.
- Das V. 1995. *Critical events: An anthropological perspective on contemporary India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- de Leeuw, S. 2013. *Geographies of a lover*. Edmonton: NeWest Press.
- de Leeuw, S. 2015. *Skeena*. Halfmoon Bay: Caitlin Press Inc.
- Dubow, J. 2008. *Minima Moralia: Or the negative dialectics of exile*. In: Rosen, R. (ed.) *Imaginary Coordinates*, R. Rosen (ed), 56-63. Chicago: Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, Chicago.
- Entwistle, A. 2013. *Poetry, geography, gender: Women rewriting contemporary Wales*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Fairley, B. 1954. *Heinrich Heine: An interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Feise, E. 1963. Heinrich Heine, 1797-1856. In *Heinrich Heine: Lyric poems and ballads* (trans.), H. Heine, v-xv. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Gerhardt, C. 2004. *A place for humility: Whitman, Dickinson and the natural world*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press.
- Gilman, S.L. and P.U. Hohendahl. 1991. Introduction. In *Heinrich Heine and the Occident: Multiple identities, multiple receptions*, P.U. Hohendahl and S.L. Gilman (eds), 1-18. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Goetschel, W. 2002. Nightingales instead of owls: Heine's joyous philosophy. In *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine*, R.F. Cook (ed), 139-168. Rochester: Camden House.
- Harrison, P. 2007a. The space between us: Opening remarks on the concept of dwelling. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25:625-647.
- Harrison, P. 2007b. 'How shall I say it.?' Relating the nonrelational. *Environment and Planning A* 39:590-608.
- Harrison, P. 2010. Testimony and the truth of the other. In *Taking-Place. Non Representational Theories and Geography*, B. Anderson and P. Harrison (eds), 161-179, London: Ashgate.
- Harrison, P. 2011. flētum: a prayer for X. *Area* 43:158-161.
- Harrison, P. 2015. After affirmation, or, being a loser: On vitalism, sacrifice and cinders. *GeoHumanities* 1:285-306.
- Heine, H. 1947. *The North Sea and other poems* (trans.). London: Allan Wingate.
- Heine, H. 1963. *Heinrich Heine: Lyric poems and ballads* (trans.). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Hohendahl, P.W. 1995. *Prismatic thought: Theodor W. Adorno*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Howell, A., J.C. Stone, J. MacKay, F. Eunson, L. Collins and S. Crosbie. 2008. Recollections and reflections. *Scottish Geographical Journal* 24:117-139.
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/walt-whitman> (last accessed: 15/12/16)
- Jäger, L. 2004. *Adorno: A political biography* (trans.). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Jameson, F. (1990) *Late Marxism: Adorno, or the persistence of the dialectic*. London: Verso.
- Jay, M. 1984. *Adorno*. London: Fontana Paperbacks.
- Johnston, R.J. 1993. The geographer's degrees of freedom: Wreford Watson, postwar progress in human geography, and the future of scholarship in UK geography. *Progress in Human Geography* 17:319-332.
- Kearns, G. 2014. If wood were an element: Primo Levi and the materiality of memory. *Quaderni di studi semiotico* July-December:21-49.
- Kruse, J.A. 2002. Late thoughts: reconsiderations from the *Matratzengruft*. In *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine*, R.F. Cook (ed), 315-341. Rochester: Camden House.
- Ledbetter M. 1996. *Victims and the postmodern narrative, or doing violence to the body: An ethic of reading and writing*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Levi, P. 1987. *If this is a man* (trans.). London: Abacus.
- Levi, P. 1989. *The drowned and the saved* (trans.). London: Abacus.
- Literary Geographies*, e-journal since 2015, available at:
<http://literarygeographies.net/index.php/LitGeogs/index> (last accessed: 15/12/16).
- Magrane, E. 2015. Situating geopoetics. *GeoHumanities* 1:86-102.
- Mali, J. 2003. *Mythistory: The making of modern historiography*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- McCole, J. 1993. *Walter Benjamin and the antimonies of tradition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

- Morgan, A. 2009. A figure of annihilated human existence: Agamben and Adorno in question. *Law and Critique* 20:299-307.
- Müller-Doohm, S. 2005. *Adorno: A biography* (trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Oard, B. 2011-2016. Poetry after Auschwitz: What Adorno really said, and where he said it, original blog and subsequent responses available at: <http://mindfulpleasures.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/poetry-after-auschwitz-what-adorno.html> (last accessed: 15/12/2016).
- Peters, P. 2002. A walk on the wild side: Heine's eroticism. In *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine*, R.F. Cook (ed), 55-103. Rochester: Camden House.
- Philo, C. 1991. Introduction, acknowledgements and brief words on older words and older worlds. In *New words, new worlds: Reconceptualising social and cultural geography*, C. Philo (ed), 1-13. St. David's University College, Lampeter: Social and Cultural Geography Study Group of the Institute of British Geographers.
- Philo, C. 2005. The geographies that wound. *Population, space and place* 11:441-454.
- Philo, C. 2017a. 'Childhood is measured out by sounds and sights and smells, before the dark of reason grows': Children's geographies at 12'. Forthcoming in *Children's Geographies*.
- Philo, C. 2017b. Less-than-human geographies. Forthcoming in *Political Geography*.
- Poetry Foundation, 2016, Walt Whitman (1819-1892), available at:
- Reed, T.J. 1991. History in nutshells: Heine as cartoonist. In *Heinrich Heine and the Occident: Multiple identities, multiple receptions*, P.U. Hohendahl and S.L. Gilman (eds), 163-181. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Robinson, G.M. 1997. James Wreford Watson, 1915-1990. *Geographers Biobibliographical Essays* 17:106-115.
- Roche, J.F. 1988. Democratic space: The ecstatic geography of Walt Whitman and Frank Lloyd Wright. *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 6:16-32.
- Rose, G. 1978. *The melancholy science: An introduction to the thought of Theodor W. Adorno*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Roskies, G. and N. Diamant. 2012. *Holocaust literature: A history and guide*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press.
- Saldanha, A. 2013. Some principles of geocommunity, original blog and subsequent responses available at: <http://www.geocritique.org/arun-saldanha-some-principles-of-geocommunity/> (last accessed: 15/12/16).
- Saunders, A. 2010. Literary geography: reforging the connections. *Progress in Human Geography* 34:436-452.
- Schweppenhauser, G. 2009. *Theodor W. Adorno: An introduction* (trans.). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, 2016, What is geopoetics?, available at: <http://www.geopoetics.org.uk/welcome/what-is-geopoetics/> (last accessed: 15/12/16).
- Steinecke, H. 1991. 'The lost cosmopolite': Heine's images of foreign cultures and peoples in the historical poems of the late period. In *Heinrich Heine and the Occident: Multiple identities, multiple receptions*, P.U. Hohendahl and S.L. Gilman (eds), 139-162. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Thrift, N. 2000. Entanglements of power: shadows? In *Entanglements of power: Geographies of domination/resistance*, J.P. Sharp. P. Routledge, C. Philo & R. Paddison (eds), 269-278), London: Routledge.
- Vatter, M. 2014. *The republic of the living: biopolitics and the critique of civil society*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Winnberg J. 2003. *An aesthetics of vulnerability: The sentimentum and the novels of Graham Swift* (Gothenburg Studies in English No.85). Göteborg University, Department of English: Gothenberg, Sweden.
- Withers, C.J.W. 2008. Edinburgh's geographical centenary – but an intellectual and a departmental history? *Scottish Geographical Journal* 124:103-116.
- Woodyer, T. and H. Geoghegan. 2013. (Re)enchanted geography? The nature of being critical and the character of critique in human geography. *Progress in Human Geography* 37:195-214.
- Wreford Watson J. 1985. *The wounds of love*. Broxburn: Alna Press.
- Wreford Watson, J. 1982. *The United States: Habitation of hope*. Essex: London.
- Wreford Watson, J. 1983. The soul of geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 8:385-399.
- Written in the Rocks, 2012, What is geopoetry?, available at <https://writtenintherocks.wordpress.com/2012/03/13/hello-world/> (last accessed: 15/12/16).